

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-01

INR-10 NSAE-00 USIA-15 TRSE-00 XMB-04 OPIC-06

SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02

L-03 NSC-05 PA-02 SS-15 CU-06 IO-14 /122 W

-----027285 160714Z /16

R 151810Z FEB 78

FM AMCONSUL VANCOUVER

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4032

INFO RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 1947

ALL OTHER AMCONSULS CANADA POUCH

UNCLAS VANCOUVER 0213

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: TASK FORCE ON CANADIAN UNITY: VANCOUVER HEARINGS

1. UNITY TASK FORCE HELD TWO MARATHON DAYS OF HEARINGS IN VANCOUVER FEBRUARY 8 AND 9. GENERAL MEDIA CONSENSUS WAS THAT HEARINGS WERE USEFUL FOR ONE REASON IF NO OTHER: THEY SHOWED THAT B.C.'S REPUTATION FOR BEING ANTI-FRENCH IS GROSSLY EXAGGERATED. APART FROM SEVERAL VERY MINOR INCIDENTS OF PREJUDICE, THE OVERWHELMING SENTIMENTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIANS AT THE HEARINGS WERE OF GOOD WILL TOWARDS QUEBEC AND CONCERN THAT CANADA REMAIN TOGETHER IN CONFEDERATION. BEYOND THESE SENTIMENTS, HOWEVER, THERE WAS AN ALMOST COMPLETE LACK OF AGREEMENT AMONG THE HUNDREDS OF PARTICIPANTS AS TO HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE NATIONAL UNITY PROBLEM, MUCH LESS HOW TO SOLVE IT.

2. ECONOMIC ISSUES (UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION, REGIONAL DISPARITIES) WERE THE FOCUS OF MANY OF THE PRESENTATIONS AT THE HEARINGS. PREMIER BENNETT, IN THE OFFICIAL B.C. GOVERNMENT BRIEF, REITERATED THE VIEW THAT THE SOLUTION TO B.C.'S COMPLAINTS AGAINST OTTAWA -- AS WELL AS THOSE

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OF QUEBEC -- LIES IN MORE PROVINCIAL POWER TO CONTROL AND PROTECT ITS OWN DESTINY. THE PREMIER PROPOSED, FOR EXAMPLE, VARIOUS CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS WHICH WOULD GIVE THE PROVINCES A STRONGER VOICE IN THE COMPOSITION AND OPERATION OF FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE SENATE, SUPREME COURT, AND REGULATORY AGENCIES AFFECTING WESTERN INTERESTS.

3. B.C. FRANCOPHONES EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE BITTERNESS
AND RESENTMENT THAT FEW BRITISH COLUMBIANS SEE ANY NEED
TO ACCOMMODATE FRENCH CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE ASPIRATIONS
AND APPEAR NOT TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT THERE ARE TWO
"FOUNDING NATIONS" IN CANADA.

4. COPIES OF B.C. GOVERNMENT BRIEF AND PRESS EDITORIALS
ON THE HEARINGS ARE BEING MAILED TO EMBASSY AND EUR/CAN.
LUPPI

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